

TRICARE Europe

Advisory

"Your passport to quality health"

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New Medicare Part B Provisions Affect *TRICARE for Life* Enrollees

Military retirees who receive TRICARE for Life benefits will not be penalized for late enrollment in Medicare Part B, the Supplementary Medical Insurance Program, under new provisions of the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003. The bill also waives penalties for TRICARE beneficiaries who currently pay premium surcharges for late enrollment in Medicare Part B, provided they enrolled after Jan. 1, 2001. Military retirees are required to enroll in Medicare Part B in order to receive TRICARE For Life benefits.

The Act makes three very important changes relating to enrollment in Medicare Part B. The first two changes affect military retirees not enrolled in Part B, or paying surcharges because they enrolled after they were initially eligible for Part B. The third change affects all retirees enrolled in Part B.

1. Military retirees eligible for TRICARE For Life, but not enrolled in Medicare Part B, may enroll without penalty during a special enrollment period through Dec. 31, 2004. The special enrollment period will be announced via Medicare on the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil.
2. Military retirees who enrolled in Medicare Part B after Jan. 1, 2001 and who are subject to a premium surcharge for late enrollment can have their surcharges eliminated by demonstrating

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that they are covered under TRICARE. While the elimination of surcharges is effective January 1, 2004, the Department of Health and Human Services is still determining how to implement these new procedures.

3. The third change made by the bill affects all seniors — not just military retirees. The Part B premium will be tied to income beginning in 2007. Individuals with incomes above \$80,000 will pay more, and couples with incomes above \$160,000 will pay more.

For more information about TRICARE for Life, beneficiaries may call or visit their local MTF or contact the nearest TRICARE Service Center. The TRICARE Europe website also hosts a retiree section with news and links to important information at www.europe.tricare.osd.mil.

For more Social Security retirement benefits, visit www.ssa.gov. Beneficiaries may also call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213; TTY (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) users may call 1-800-325-0778.

Medicare Part B enrollment forms are available from Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) at many U.S. embassies or consulates, or online at www.medicare.gov/Basics/EnrollmentPackage.asp.

Editor's Note: TRICARE For Life beneficiaries who need to update or verify their DEERS eligibility, or beneficiaries who have received an Explanation of Benefits (EOB) stating that they need to update their eligibility should contact the nearest ID card facility for assistance. Information about DEERS records may be obtained at the DEERS Support Office at 001-800-538-9552. This office is open from 3 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Central European Time. TFL beneficiaries may also update their home addresses on the TRICARE web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress.